

Obvious by JoMo3

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Summary:

Mike and El both know they love one another. But thinking it and actually saying it are two different things.

Typical "I word" fluff.

Obvious

A light summer breeze blew as Max and Eleven made their way through the woods. It was almost 180 days into Eleven's year of re-hiding. Thankfully she didn't feel as isolated and alone as she did the first time around. After day 44 Hopper had begun letting her friends, aka The Party, visit on a semi-regular basis. Mike was the first to come over of course, with the other boys-Dustin, Lucas, and Will-joining him soon after. Now with it being the middle of summer, the visits had become regular.

With Max things took a little longer. But once the misunderstandings were sorted out between she and Eleven, the two became fast friends and Max would often visit on her own sometimes to see her.

Recently Nancy had visited the cabin to begin tutoring Eleven in an attempt to prepare for the coming school year where she'd be joining her friends. Last week when their tutoring had concluded, Eleven had noticed Nancy's colorfully painted nails, and the next time she'd visited, Nancy had painted Eleven's nails a bright pink.

Now, of course, Eleven was obsessed with painting nails.

There was no way Hopper was letting her paint his nails; and the boys had all declined (even Mike, after Eleven greeted him with fluorescent nail polish on his latest visit). So that left Max.

Today Max had come over alone and the two girls sat in El's room as Max played some tapes for Eleven as she got her nails painted. Max wasn't necessarily the type to get her nails dolled up, but El did a decent job. Besides, after the awkward first encounter between the two girls, Max was determined to do what she could to befriend El.

Now, the two girls were headed towards the dirt road that led back to Hawkins. Max had brought her skateboard and was going to board her way home.

"What are you doing later?" El asked Max as they neared the road.

"Me and Lucas are going to see a movie," Max answered.

El looked confused. "I thought you were fighting."

Recently Max and Lucas had gotten into an argument; the cause of which El couldn't remember.

"No, we're good now, he apologized," Max responded. Shaking her head, she added "I'm so jealous of you and Mike."

"Why?"

"Because you two never fight," Max said.

El smiled at that. It was true, she and Mike never really argued. Things seemed to fall easily into place with the two of them.

"Besides, Mike's so in love with you he'd never argue with you anyway."

That got El to stop. "Love?"

Max stopped too, and turned around. "What?"

"You think Mike loves me?"

Max shrugged. "Isn't it obvious, El? He looks at you all like 'Oh, Eleven, I would do anything for you' Mwa-mwa-mwa," she added, making kissing noises as El blushed and covered her mouth, laughing.

"He doesn't say that," she said.

"Maybe not out loud. But you've got him wrapped around your finger, El."

Eleven glanced at her finger, then back at Max, confused.

"It's just an expression," Max explained. Sometimes she forgot how literal Eleven took things. "It means he'll do anything you ask him."

El nodded in understanding. "But you...think he loves me?"

"Well, I mean, we are only fourteen," Max said. "But I think you two may be an exception."

They continued on their journey, with Max telling her friend more about what she and Lucas were up to, while El replayed a certain word in her head: *love*?

She knew what it meant; days of watching soap operas will do that to you. But from what she'd learned from TV, love was an adult thing. And yet she couldn't deny the warm feeling she got from just being in the same room as Mike, or the way she'd felt empty during that first year of hiding, being away from him. But was that "love?"

Then she thought about the way that Mike looked at her, and the way he was when he was with her. The soft and patient voice, the smiles that would reassure her if she felt uneasy. How he'd hold her hand when she got nervous. And although she was still, as Dustin often teased her about, "naive," she knew from the way Mike's demeanor changed around her that the two of them had something different than the rest of the Party had.

She knew how she felt, and maybe that was love. But should she tell him? Did he already know? Did Mike feel the same way?

She wished there was someone to talk to about this, but she knew her adoptive father wouldn't want to hear it; nor would Max, really. For the time being she was on her own.

Mike, meanwhile, was leading the boys in another marathon game of Dungeons and Dragons. It'd been a while since they'd played. Mike had feared they had outgrown it, but was relieved when the boys had been enthused about playing again. Max, not a huge D & D fan, had chosen instead to spend the bulk of the day at the cabin, visiting El.

What had started out as a "short" 3 hour campaign had evolved into a now 7 hour one. All of the boys were having fun, except for one.

"Are we almost done?" Lucas asked, his leg bouncing under the table.

“You asked that twenty minutes ago,” Will commented.

“And I didn’t really get an answer twenty minutes ago,” Lucas shot back.

“So what you’ll be a little late to the movie,” Dustin said.

“Bull. If this were Mike and El, we would’ve wrapped this up hours ago,” Lucas said.

That caused Mike to glance up. “What?”

“How many times have we stopped stuff early so Mike can see El?”

“That’s different,” Will said.

“Why?”

“Because she’s stuck in a cabin,” Mike answered.

Lucas sighed. “I know. I’m sorry.”

“Look,” Mike began, “if you want to go, you can. We’ll finish up later.”

“No,” Dustin whined. “I want to see how it ends. Just because lover boy here doesn’t want to be two minutes late...”

“Did you seriously just call me lover boy?” Lucas asked.

“Uh...no,” Dustin responded.

“Because if anybody’s in love, it’s Mike and El.”

Mike felt his face heat up. “No we’re not!”

“Guys, can we get back to the game?” Will asked.

“Uh, actually you two kind of are,” Dustin said to Mike.

“Yeah, it’s pretty obvious, Mike,” Lucas said.

Despite the color in his face, Mike felt there was some truth to what

they were saying. He had been thinking, for a while, that maybe he was in love El. But he honestly didn't know if she felt the same, let alone knew what it meant. He didn't want to say it to her and come off sounding like a mouth breather.

Just then, interrupting his thoughts, they heard movement on the stairs, and Max bounded down, looking at the table. "You guys are seriously still playing?" she asked. Looking at Lucas, she asked, "I thought you said it was going to be a short game?"

"It was," Lucas answered. "It was supposed to be."

"Oh. Figures. Your girlfriend says hi, by the way," Max told Mike.

"You saw her today?"

"Yeah, she....did this," Max said, holding up her hands to show her brightly colored nails. "It's not really my thing, but...it isn't too bad, right?" she asked, looking at the boys for verification.

"No, I bet all the dainty little girls get their nails like that," Dustin teased.

Max glared at him, and shoved her hands in her pockets. "Shut up."

"I think they look nice," Lucas told her, standing.

Max ducked her head, trying, ineffectively, to hide her blush and the shy smile that came to her face. "Thanks. Whatever. Let's just go."

"Oh!" Lucas said, remembering something. "Can you tell Mike how he and El are so in love?"

"No we're not," Mike said, shaking his head.

"Well, she's in love with you, I can tell you that much," Max said.

"Wait, did she say that?" Mike asked.

"No," Max explained. "But, you know...the way she looks at you, it's pretty obvious, Wheeler." Looking at Lucas, she said, "Let's go."

Mike was left to think about that the rest of the day. *Was she ?*

Both Mike and El danced around the topic the next couple of days when they either spoke on the radio or in person. The cat finally got out of the bag nearly a week later.

Mike made the trip up to the cabin, and Eleven, who was breaking one of Hopper's rules- *always keep the curtains drawn* -was sitting by the window as she anxiously waited for Mike to arrive. Soon she heard the crunch of leaves and a moment later saw a mop of black hair come up the hill, as Mike pushed his bike forward. He rested it against a tree, then climbed over the tripwire.

Smiling, she unlatched the door before he'd made it up the steps, and greeted him with a hug.

"Mike," she whispered into his shirt.

"Hey, El," he said, hugging her back.

"I missed you," she said, pulling away and looking up at him.

"I missed you too," he admitted, blushing. "What do you want to do?"

She shrugged, unsure.

"Do you want to go for a walk? It's pretty nice out. I know that's breaking one of Hopper's rules, but we won't go too far."

So the two set off into the woods, chatting about things; El telling Mike about her progress with Nancy and updating him on the book she was reading; Mike told her about the campaign he was planning and the movie the group had recently gone to see.

"What movie was it?" she asked.

"It was called 'Back to the Future'," he said with a smile.

She scrunched her face in confusion. "How can you go back to the future?"

"Well, they have this car that can go back in time, right? And they get there, but then they've gotta go back home. *Back* to the future, where they live."

She still didn't get it, shaking her head.

"You would've liked it," he told her. "I can't wait till the fall, when you can go places with us."

"Me too," she said, taking his hand.

After a few moments of quiet walking, El decided to ask the question that'd been bugging her for a week. "Mike?"

"Yeah?"

Ducking her head, she shook it, making her curls bounce. "Never mind."

"No, El. What is it?"

Sighing, she said, "Max told me..."

They heard crunching leaves, and a moment later saw Hopper's bulky figure making his way towards them. "The hell you two doing out here?" he asked.

"Walking," El offered, hoping he would take a hint and let them finish their conversation.

Hopper shook his head. "You know the rules. Get back to the cabin."

Mike, still holding her hand, began to go towards the cabin, but El pulled on him. "No," she told Hopper.

"Excuse me?" he asked in disbelief.

"We're safe," she explained. "And we aren't too far from the cabin. We're not stupid."

Mike, still grasping her hand, looked between Hopper and El, wondering how this was going to play out.

Hopper huffed, pinching the bridge of his nose. “*Fine* . But don’t go much farther.”

El nodded. Hopper gave her a half-glare, then turned and walked back towards the cabin.

“That was awesome,” Mike said, turning back to El.

She blushed. “Thank you.”

Mike turned to keep the walk going, but stopped, remembering. “What is it you were going to say? About Max?”

“Oh, um...nothing,” she said, deciding it could wait.

“Oh. Okay,” Mike said. He didn’t believe it was nothing, but didn’t want to push the matter.

So they continued their walk, with the two talking about their friends, parents, and other things they wanted to do before the summer finished. By the time they got back to the cabin, the sun was beginning its descent in the sky. Hopper stood outside on the porch, smoking a cigarette.

“I guess I’ll go,” Mike said once they arrived. “I told my mom I’d be back for dinner.”

“Okay,” El said. No matter how often they saw each other, she always hated to see him go.

“Can I come over tomorrow?” he asked her.

She nodded her head eagerly.

“Okay, then, um...I’ll see you tomorrow, then.” With a quick glance at Hopper, he gave her a short peck.

She smiled, as he turned to leave. “Bye, Mike,” she called as he stepped over the tripwire. “Love you!” And she immediately put her

hand over her mouth. *Did she just say that??*

Mike froze. Behind them, Hopper seemed to have developed a cough at what he'd just overheard.

"You...you do?" Mike asked, turning back around.

El, who was blushing harder than Mike had ever seen, hesitantly nodded her head. Mike made his way back over to her, over the tripwire, and took her hands in his. "I love you," he told her, smiling as their eyes met.

"You do?" she asked.

"Isn't it obvious?" he asked back.

She smiled and Mike, not caring anymore if Hopper was there or not, pressed his lips to El's as they embraced.

A moment later they pulled apart, and he said it again, "I love you," loving the way it sounded. She pulled him back to her, giggling as their lips crashed into each other once more, and he couldn't help but giggle as well as her arms wrapped around his neck.

When they pulled away again, El breathed "I love you" to Mike before he pulled her back, the two of them having a hard time both trying to manage kissing and laughing at the same time.

Eventually it was Hopper who ended their love parade, clearing his throat from the porch. "That's more than enough, you two," he said. El smiled, and she and Mike both blushed again.

"I'll, um...see you tomorrow, El," Mike said to her.

She nodded again. "Okay."

"Love you," he whispered once more.

"Love you," she said back.

Ignoring (and not seeing) Hopper's glare, the two kissed one more time before Mike finally let go of El's hand and climbed the tripwire

to go home.

Watching him walk his bike towards the dirt road, El smiled and called, "I love you, Mike!" She didn't care if the whole world knew.

Author's Note:

Just curious: what are you guys hoping for in season 3? My wish list is as follows...

1. A Mileven date.
2. For Dustin to get a girl.
3. For Will to get a break.
4. Lumax being mushy, but not as mushy/fluffy as Mileven.
5. Some Jopper!
6. For Steve to find some happiness
7. More Steve/Dustin
8. and an I love you from Mike and Eleven.

Anyway...thanks for reading, I think comments are cool if you'd like to leave them.